

Benjamin Lundy to Andrew Jackson, September 4, 1823, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

BENJAMIN LUNDY TO JACKSON.1

1 Benjamin Lundy (1789–1839), Quaker antislavery man, began to publish his *Genius of Universal Emancipation* in 1821 at Mt. Pleasant, O., but soon moved it to Greeneville, Tenn., and in 1824 to Baltimore.

Greeneville, Tennessee, September 4, 1823.

To General Andrew Jackson —As we have no personal knowledge of each other, and having for my part very few acquaintances in the section of country in which thee resides, I am under the necessity of introducing myself preparatory to stating the object of my troubling thee with this letter.

I am the editor of a periodical work entitled the “Genius of Universal Emancipation,” published in this place, and devoted exclusively to the subject of negro slavery as it exists in this Republic. This subject is of a nature purely political; and in treating upon it I conceive it to be my duty to take into view the whole scope of general politics in which the nation is concerned. It will therefore follow, of course, that the election of civil officers, in the higher departments of the government, comes fairly within the limits marked out by the rules of propriety for me to take an active part, if I shall consider it necessary to do so. But I am no factionist; I proceed upon independent principles; and if I know myself, have nothing but the good of my country in view. Let the world go as it will, I wish to see justice done on every hand, believing that this, alone, will preserve us, as a nation, amid the agonizing pangs and convulsive throes of corrupted, diseased, and expiring Empires.

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It is understood that thee will be a candidate for the Presidential chair of the United States, at the next election. And as I consider it a matter of great importance that our chief magistrate be a man who is disposed to use his influence in bringing about a gradual abolition of slavery in every part of the Republic, I would be glad, if it is not inconsistent with thy views, to know thy sentiments on the subject. I am not about to make any promises of efficient support, etc. even if thee should satisfy me on this point; but I will just observe that influential persons in some parts of the country (free states) have requested me to inform them whether thee is, or is not, a friend to *universal liberty* ; and could I be authorized to state that thee would be inclined to aid in carrying this principle fairly into effect, it would make a powerful diversion in thy favour. The present is a time of internal and external tranquillity with us. It is a very favourable period for bringing into view, and putting in practice those great and fundamental principles of genuine republicanism which tho' deemed of vital importance, by the founders of our government, were considered too nearly allied to political perfection to be carried completely into effect ere the mass of the people had more generally emerged from the gloom of prejudice, or their minds freed from the trammels of clerical superstition and the shackles which a system of monarchy and oligarchy combined, had rivetted upon them.

In conclusion, I will observe that I have not committed myself on the Presidential question, and shall wait with anxiety for a letter from thee. Please to favour me with a line by mail, as soon as possible, stating thy views on the subject above mentioned, and signifying thy pleasure as to their being made public, and in what shape; by so doing thee will oblige Him, Respectfully,